

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

Chairman

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YOUTH GROUPS REPAIR TYPHOON DAMAGE

Following the wide-spread damage of the typhoon, August 13 - 14, after a survey of the Yamanashi area and needs by Mr. Ogawa, CWS, youth groups responded to a call for volunteers to make up Disaster Work Camps. The planning committee -- Miss Reiko Yanagita, CWS; the Revs. Mr. Nishido and Mr. R. Davis of the Kyodan Youth Commission; and Mr. Kobayashi, YMCA -- set up the first camp on August 18-19 at Katsunuma in Yamanashi-Ken. The group of 30 young people, mostly students, aided farmers in straightening or re-building the grape arbors, the most serious need, since the typhoon had struck just as the grapes were ripening and threatened the harvest yield of the entire area.

In the second camp, held at Kiriishi, Yamanashi, the group of over 30 volunteer young people were led by Mr. Nishido. A village in which rural evangelism was recently begun, as well as many neighboring farmers, were isolated by destruction of parts of the only road. Over the road, impassable by car but fortunately still passable by "sanrinsha" (small 3-wheel truck), the campers gradually repaired much of the washed-out sections during their five days' period (Aug. 25 - 29).

The first camp was a cooperative effort of the Kyodan and Church World Service, with the second camp sponsored also by the NCC. Funds were furnished for the camp by CWS but individual costs of travel, etc., were borne by each volunteer.

Information is incomplete, but it is also reported that a young people's work camp was held in the Noto Peninsula under the leadership of the Rev. Tsuneaki of Kanazawa.

LACOUR TEAM ENDS SIXTH, FINAL VISIT

On September 1 at Aoyama P.S. Hall, more than 1500 Christians honored Dr. & Mrs. Lawrence L. Lacour in a farewell musical concert. The meeting was in gratitude for the six annual evangelistic teams, brought to Japan under the leadership of Dr. & Mrs. Lacour, which have set up new evangelistic centers and churches in cooperation with the N.C.C. and the Kyodan.

At the time of his chaplaincy at Yokosuka Naval Base (1945) Dr. Lacour, evangelist of Iowa Conference, Methodist Church, became interested in evangelism in Japan. With his wife and two co-workers, he returned to Japan in 1950 and held 197 musical-evangelistic meetings in 128 cities through-out Japan, with attendance at many meetings running into the thousands, and with a total of 38,048 persons expressing interest in Christianity through signed cards.

After this initial response, a new plan was considered by which evangelism might be concentrated. Fukushima Ken was chosen, and a specific purpose was developed: centers would be opened, preferably near a substantial and advisory church, and would be initially staffed for two summer months (July - August) by visiting evangelists, with baptism for those prepared for it at the end of the summer. Japanese pastors would continue the work through the year, and the program would be repeated annually for six years, aiming at self-support for the new churches within that period.

1954 saw the beginning of this unique effort when 24 workers (19 pastors, 2 wives, 3 laymen) opened the first ten centers in a pioneering evangelistic crusade. The first year revealed an unusual record of 411 seekers and 45 baptisms at the end of the summer, with 139 more desiring baptism. One church became self-supporting and invited a full-time pastor from 1955.

The area was broadened in 1955, when 30 members came (including 7 wives) -- in addition to nine previous centers, ten new ones were opened in Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe and Fukushima, with the Tadami church becoming self-supporting in 1956.

Subsequent years brought the number of centers to the present (1959) number of 34, directed by the current team of 42 members and wives. With an increase of 11 new centers, the current program has been the most widely spread effort of the six years' visitations. The aim of self-support in all centers has been largely realized: ten churches have already become so and it is expected that another thirteen will make this step in the current year, with only two or three remaining to be aided by the United Church.

Although the Lacour Crusade (1954) was first arranged in co-operation with the N.C.C., the churches themselves were to become members of the United Church of Christ in Japan. Therefore, from 1954, a special committee was formed from representatives of both NCC and Interboard Missionary Field Committee, use of funds being directed by the United Church, with American remittances sent through the Interboard Field Committee. With the completion of the work by the visiting team this year, the General Evangelism committee of the United Church will take over supervision of the churches which have not yet reached self-supporting status.

Observers, as well as participants in the annual team visits, have felt that the great benefits of the Lacour visitation have been due to the cooperative method: the visiting American pastor worked with a Japanese pastor in a day-by-day program of worship and evangelism. Often the American church of the visiting pastor benefited greatly through its own pastor's new understanding of evangelism as well as through its own continuing ties with a church in Japan. As the visiting pastors shared the life of common people in Japan they were enabled to minister to them not as strangers but as fellow men within the culture of Japan. It was this note which Dr. Lacour emphasized in his final talk at the farewell celebration, when he urged the Japanese church to move ahead through cooperation, with the formation of a precise plan for evangelism.

CENTENNIAL OF EVANGELISM TO BLIND CELEBRATED

On August 27, more than 150 blind Christians gathered in Tokyo to commemorate the centennial anniversary of evangelism to the blind. In particular, seven men were honored for their contributions, among them the outstanding blind layman, Mr. Tadasu Yoshimoto. A graduate of Tokyo Commercial High School, Mr. Yoshimoto later went to England and attended Oxford, and upon his return to Japan became a lecturer at Waseda. When his eye sight began to fail at that time, he became interested in the blind. In 1906 he formed a group of blind persons into an evangelistic meeting. While again visiting England as a trader, he became blind, and pushed the production of a Braille Bible for Japan. In England he also managed Oxford House and was married to an English lady. Because of his early and energetic interest on behalf of the blind, he has become known as "Father of the Blind" in Japan.

Among the total of about 18,000 blind persons in Japan are nearly 1000 Christians, with 27 groups of cooperating members and 10 blind pastors. As a member of the NCC, the council of the blind Christians is represented by its chairman, the Rev. Kozo Kashiwai. The history of evangelism among the blind in Japan is now told fully in a new publication "The Blind and the Christian Movement". (Japanese)

DELEGATES TO CENTENNIAL ARRIVING

On November 2, as part of the NCC Centennial Celebration, Governor Azuma of Tokyo will honor 500 special foreign guests at a reception at Miyozumi Park. Among these guests will be members of the overseas Japanese churches, retired missionaries and representatives of cooperating agencies, churches and boards.

Among the expected guests are more than 300 representatives of Japanese churches in Hawaii, Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago and New York. Many of these are arriving in September.

From the World Council of Churches will be its general secretary, Dr. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, who will also give the main address at Miyazumi-cho Church on Monday evening, November 2. The I. M. C. will be represented by Dr. Charles W. Ranson and the EACC by its chairman, Bishop Sobrepena, who is also bishop of the United Church of the Philippines. Representatives from other countries include: Canada -- United Church: Dr. C. J. L. Bates; England -- Church Missionary Society: Dr. Canon Max A. C. Warren; Finland -- Lutheran Mission, Helsinki: the Rev. Oivo Rapeli; Germany -- Association of Evangelical Academy in Germany: Dr. Eberhard Muller; North German Mission, Bremen: Dr. Erich Ramsauer;

Superintendent of Missions, Bremen: Dr. Paul G. Moller.

From the United States: EUB -- Dr. Paul S. Mayer and the Rev. Herman H. Koppelman, Acting Exec. Sec. of Foreign Missions; Methodist Church -- Bishop Arthur Moore, Dr. D. T. Brumbaugh; Miss Margaret Billingsley; Dr. C. W. Iglehart; United Lutheran Church: Dr. Ralph Loew, Dr. Raymond W. Wargelin, Miss Nona Deal, Miss Marion Potts. United Presbyterian Church: Miss Margaret Shannon, the Rev. C. John L. Bates, Jr., Mrs. Andrew Kurth, Dr. Henry Little, Dr. & Mrs. Howard Hannaford.

BRIEF NOTES:

At the invitation of the Okinawa Church, Dr. Charles W. Iglehart will visit Okinawa from Sept. 26 until Oct. 6 for evangelism and conference.

Bishop J. Wascom Piskett, former bishop in India and presently leader of mass evangelism, Evangelism Department of the Methodist Church, will visit Japan in September. He will meet with Kyodan leaders and will aid in preparation of evangelism programs.

REQUEST: During the summer, an informal poll was taken among readers for suggested changes or improvements. Two important comments were: (1) news is too largely centered about events in Tokyo. (2) information of coming events should be listed, such as the calender in the Christian Century. Therefore, for help in making news coverage representative of the cooperating members and places of their work in Japan we request your aid. Also, please notify us of important coming events in the different regions of Japan. For either, a post card will be adequate, listing accurately and briefly the news item or coming event. Address: Robert W. Northup, 540 Takakura, Kamida, Hinomachi, Minamitama, Tokyo.

